



The ReGenesis Partnership

A Case Study

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Towards an Environmental Justice Collaborative Model: Case Studies of Six Partnerships Used to Address Environmental Justice Issues in Communities (EPA/100-R-03-002)

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ReGenesis Partnership

In the beginning there was no cooperative spirit. Early the community was not happy with the current state of affairs.

Harold made the first step reaching out...saying we want you to be involved and asked for our input.

The community group is the driver and the most important partners are the local government partners.

Now we actually have federal, state, local, and community all sitting down talking about the same issue. Previously only adversarial stances were taken...[Now] everyone more or less sharing the same vision.

This has been a real coming of age for people in the community. So much face-to-face contact. It caused local people to recognize the extent of resources available.

— Interviewees, ReGenesis Partnership

Community History¹

The County and City of Spartanburg are located in the upper northwest region of South Carolina. Since 1970, the county's population nearly doubled from 174,000 in 1970 to over 250,000 today.¹² The City has remained at around 40,000 since that time but is located in the center of an urban area that supports an estimated 115,000 people. Coupled with the increases in population has been the Spartanburg region's gradual transformation from a traditional textile-based economy to a much more diversified one. By most indicators, the Spartanburg area has been thriving over the past several years. The County now hosts more than 115 internationally owned firms, and the City is currently undergoing a major downtown revitalization effort that, through a \$75 million public/private partnership, will bring a major hotel, an office park, and a golf-learning center to the downtown area.²

Despite the prosperous economy, at least one section of the City has not benefited from the economic expansion. The Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods are located just beyond the City's major downtown area. This community has a 96 percent African American population in a county that is predominantly Caucasian and a city that is essentially half African American and half Caucasian.³ Established around textile mills and other industrial facilities, this community has been faced with the negative consequences of mill and plant closure.⁴ The area has not benefited from any significant commercial development for several years and

¹ Interviews for this case study were primarily conducted during the week of October 1, 2001. Two additional interviews were conducted in late November. Fourteen separate interviews were conducted and a total of sixteen persons participated. Interviews were conducted with representatives of community organizations, staff of local and federal political representatives, federal, state, and local government agencies, a company, a local college, a consulting firm, and a regional environmental organization.

² The current population total of Spartanburg County equals 253, 791 (75.1% Caucasian and 20.8% African American).

residents have difficulty accessing groceries, restaurants, or other shops unless they drive or take a cab to other more affluent⁵ parts of the city.⁶

Most notably, however, the Arkwright and Forest Park community residents live near several actual and potentially contaminated sites and an operating industrial plant. Residential neighborhoods in Arkwright are closely intertwined with industrial areas due to minimal local land use controls before 1976 and “a continued lack of zoning restrictions.”⁷ The areas of most concern to local residents are a 40-acre site of an abandoned (and now deconstructed) fertilizer plant referred to as the International Mineral and Chemicals (IMC) site, a 30-acre former municipal dump, and an operating chemical plant located on a 35-acre site owned by Rhodia Inc. Approximately 4,700 residents live within one mile of the site, 200 live within ¼-mile of the landfill,⁸ and a handful of residents live adjacent to the chemical plant boundary.

The many economic, environmental, health, and public safety concerns that residents have attributed to these sites have prompted some to refer to this area collectively as the “Devil’s Triangle.” Residents have stated that, “For decades, [they] have endured dump truck traffic, smoke and fumes from landfill fires, and odors from the two industries.”⁹ Residents have also stated that “there is a high percentage of cancer in the neighborhoods, especially lung, bone, and colon cancer.”¹⁰ In addition, residents report that the area supports a high rate of infant mortality, miscarriages, and birth defects.¹¹ One resident also explained that from January 2000 to July 2000, 24 people living within ¼-mile of the dump had died.¹² Beyond health concerns, locals have reportedly seen their housing values fall since the 1970s.¹³ Community members suggest that new residents cannot move in because of their concerns regarding the facilities and contaminated sites, and current ones are unable to move out because they lack the resources to do so.¹⁴

ReGenesis

During the 1990s residents in the neighborhoods of Arkwright and Forest Park began to inquire about the abandoned sites and put pressure on government agencies to clean them up. One person in particular, Harold Mitchell, grew increasingly concerned about what he saw as an alarming number of deaths and incidences of diseases in his neighborhood after returning to live there in 1993. Observations and stories of criminal activity taking place at the fertilizer facility, directly across the street from Mitchell’s home, also raised Mitchell’s and other local residents’ level of concern.¹⁵ He soon began looking into both sites. Starting in 1994, Mitchell obtained a file from the state environmental agency¹⁶ that described the type of hazardous chemicals used in the fertilizer plant’s production processes¹⁷ and had informal conversations with local residents about the type of work that took place at the facility¹⁸. His efforts to generate support to address the abandoned sites were put on hold in 1996, however, because of a serious illness in Mitchell’s family. In 1997, Mitchell once again turned his attention to the abandoned sites.¹⁹

Around this time Mitchell also founded ReGenesis, a local environmental justice organization made up of residents from the affected neighborhoods. While initially focusing on getting the sites cleaned up, ReGenesis’ attention soon began turning to the revitalization of the entire area.²⁰ Today, with over 1,400 members from the affected area, this community-based and community-driven organization²¹ continues to have strong support from the community and is the primary body responsible for consulting with government agencies on the cleanup of the contaminated sites in the area. In particular ReGenesis is working closely with government agencies to ensure clean up of the former Arkwright Dump site and the abandoned fertilizer plant. ReGenesis also participates in periodic meetings with the operating chemical plant in the

area to address concerns raised by community members. Finally, ReGenesis serves as the main point of contact for the ReGenesis Partnership, a broad-based multi-stakeholder effort to revitalize the Arkwright and Forest Park areas.

Abandoned Fertilizer Plant

The abandoned fertilizer plant, located directly north of the abandoned Arkwright Dump opened in 1910, and continued to operate until closing in 1986. The facility, owned by IMC Global, was then left idle and began to deteriorate.²² During its operations it employed many residents from the Arkwright community. Some residents believed, however, that its operations had a negative environmental impact on the community. In prior interviews conducted with former IMC employees and Arkwright residents by EPA, interviewees noted that at times the neighborhood had been filled with acid smells from the facility. They also noted that the acid or particles from the plant had corroded the aluminum siding on their homes, roofing materials, and the paint on their cars.²³ After the plant's closure, according to ReGenesis, the community voiced concerns about the abandoned site.²⁴ Between 1991 and 1995, South Carolina's environmental department required three groundwater assessment investigations, and continuous periodic sampling of groundwater, at the site. Groundwater contaminants during that time, and remaining at present, include several metals, nitrate, and fluoride. Based on the levels detected, which are above groundwater standards, South Carolina's environmental department had required further investigation via deeper wells, and additional wells, but had not required groundwater cleanup actions as of 1995.²⁵ As discussed above, starting in 1994 Mitchell began to investigate this site as well as the abandoned dump. In late 1997, after a call from Mitchell to EPA's regional office in Atlanta, EPA began to examine the fertilizer plant site more closely.²⁶ An initial review by EPA found no short-term public health threat from the site; however, EPA, subsequently, began more intensive investigations under the Superfund process²⁷ in order to assess the potential for long-term risk.²⁸ An expanded site investigation by EPA, began in January 1999²⁹, revealed several chemicals of concern at concentrations above background levels.³⁰

During EPA's expanded site investigation, the then private owner of the site, who had purchased the abandoned facility from IMC in the late 1980s, began an unauthorized demolition of the plant in June 1998.³¹ South Carolina's state environmental agency halted the demolition within hours, and later issued the owner a Notice of Violation and fine for the violation of local and state regulations.³² Soon after, concerned about the site conditions, Vigindustries Inc., a subsidiary of IMC Global, purchased back the fertilizer plant site,³³ and put in place a deconstruction plan developed in cooperation with nearby residents, Vigindustries, and appropriate federal, state, and local officials to ensure the safe deconstruction of the facility.³⁴ Deconstruction took place under State and EPA oversight over the summer and fall of 2000.³⁵ During this time, IMC staff and ReGenesis began to work cooperatively to address more long-term clean up issues while EPA's investigation continued.³⁶ IMC appeared ready to see that the fertilizer plant site would be redeveloped in accordance with ReGenesis' overall revitalization goals for the area after the clean up activities were completed. By the summer of 2000, however, the cooperation ended as over 1,200 residents filed suit in federal court against IMC Global, who, according to a local newspaper report, accused the company of "multiple offenses, including assault and battery through the release of toxic chemicals, concealing facts about environmental dangers and practicing environmental racism in the predominantly black community."³⁷ With the legal battles still ongoing, in July 2001, Vigindustries signed an Administrative Order on Consent with EPA. The order commits Vigindustries to conduct a two-part study of the fertilizer site, assessing the level of contamination at the site and determining options for cleanup.³⁸

Abandoned Arkwright Dump

The Arkwright Dump opened in 1954. According to a government report, it was purchased by the City and reportedly used for disposal of municipal, medical, and automotive wastes. It operated with relatively little oversight until it was closed in 1972 and capped with a thin layer of topsoil. In 1976, the site was sold to a private citizen. Virtually no records exist for the facility. Nearby residents continue to have open access to the dump area where thin vegetation covers the waste and debris.³⁹ As mentioned earlier, in 1994, Harold Mitchell began investigating the abandoned dump along with the abandoned fertilizer facility. In early 1998, Mitchell raised the issue of the abandoned dump to the attention of EPA's regional office in Atlanta.⁴⁰ South Carolina's state environmental agency subsequently became involved. State personnel conducted an initial walk-through of the site, finding no immediate health threats.⁴¹ After receiving the appropriate paperwork from the state agency, EPA had discussions with community residents and a consultation with the state agency, and ultimately chose to take the lead in evaluating the site.⁴²

Between October 1998 and May 1999, EPA sampling efforts at the site indicated contaminants in the soil, groundwater, surface water, and sediment.⁴³ At EPA's request, the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) then conducted a preliminary health assessment based upon EPA's sampling data. ATSDR's report indicated that the contaminants did not constitute a health threat, but added that more extensive data gathered during EPA's in-depth site evaluation could change their initial assessment and recommended additional investigation of the site.⁴⁴ EPA then made a determination to cleanup the site using a traditional Superfund process⁴ in order to address long-term environmental and human health risks.⁴⁵ In November 1999, the City signed a voluntary agreement with EPA, referred to as an Administrative Order on Consent,⁴⁶ committing the City to conduct a two-part study of the abandoned landfill, assessing contamination levels at the site and determining options for cleanup.⁴⁷ Although the City's agreement with EPA does not commit the City to address the site, EPA expects the City and other groups who have previously contributed waste to the landfill to participate in the site activities. EPA anticipates that the second part of this study will be completed in the spring of 2002.⁴⁸

Operating Chemical Plant

The operating chemical plant is directly south of the abandoned fertilizer site, bounded to the east by the Arkwright Dump, and bounded to the west by a railroad line. Residences begin just off the chemical company's fence line. In the mid-1970s a South Carolina businessman purchased the Arkwright Dump and opened up a chemical warehouse next to the site. However, residents living in the community at the time state that they were told the site would be used to develop low-income housing. After a few years, the chemical warehouse became an operating chemical plant.⁴⁹ In 1998, Rhodia, an international specialty chemical company,⁵⁰

³ This document was finalized in May 2000.

⁴ Although EPA Region 4 is addressing contamination at the Arkwright Dump site through traditional Superfund means, the Arkwright Dump site has not been placed onto the National Priorities List (NPL), which is the list of the nation's most hazardous sites; instead, EPA is addressing the Arkwright site through an "NPL-equivalent process." Region 4 has a number of sites being addressed in this manner. The term "NPL-Equivalent" has been used by Region 4 to denote such sites.

⁵ On August 6, 2002, EPA presented its "Proposed Plan" for site cleanup to the community in a public meeting. A Record of Decision is expected in September 2002.

purchased the plant. Recently EPA recognized Rhodia as a member in its new EPA Performance Track Program and the state recognized Rhodia with a pollution prevention environmental award.⁵¹ Despite these special designations by the federal and state government, many residents in the Arkwright and Forest Park areas feel strongly that a chemical company nearby is incompatible with their plans to improve quality of life and would like to see the facility relocated. Rhodia reviewed the option to relocate but found it prohibitively expensive. Rhodia is now working to build better relations with the community. In addition to reaching out to better gauge community concerns and introducing more local residents to the facility operations through open houses, Rhodia is currently undergoing a series of facilitated dialogue sessions with ReGenesis in an attempt to address issues of contention and identify best how it can participate in the ReGenesis' plans to redevelop the area.

Partnership Background

For many years, the residents of Forest Park and Arkwright, according to Harold Mitchell, had virtually no interaction with each other. Mutual concerns over the cleanup of the abandoned fertilizer facility, however, helped bring the two communities together.⁵² The residents began regularly interacting in 1998 and 1999 during meetings and workshops held with community residents, EPA, and the state environmental agency to discuss issues related to cleanup and Superfund site redevelopment. It was during these discussions that, according to Mitchell, an EPA employee suggested how the residents could fully redevelop the area.⁵³

In addition to forming ideas about broad-scale revitalization, these meetings and workshops also played other critical functions. First, they were used to identify other organizations that would need to participate to make a full-scale revitalization a reality. Mitchell and other residents recognized the importance of this because of past, only marginally successful attempts by groups in the area to implement urban redevelopment efforts.⁵⁴ These groups, according to Mitchell, excluded other important players like the City and the County.⁵⁵ Second, these meetings helped residents work out their animosity they had towards past company, facility, and government officials whom they felt had allowed a considerable amount of harm to come to their community.⁵⁶

As an outgrowth of these meetings and workshops, ReGenesis soon began seeking involvement of organizations to assist in the revitalization by engaging potential partners in one-on-one discussions and hosting a series of facilitated forums. This strong emphasis on collaboration also led to the identification of the ReGenesis partnership as an Environmental Justice Demonstration Project by the Interagency Working Group in May 2000. The first of ReGenesis' revitalization forums were held January and August 2000. Participants included local, state, and federal government and officials, business, political representatives and community development experts. The objectives of the forums were as follows:

- 1) Educate stakeholders in the fundamentals of brownfields;
- 2) Share the impact of the brownfields in the Arkwright/Forest Park Area;
- 3) Work together to build local commitment and plan to develop partnerships at the local, state, and federal level;
- 4) Learn about tools and resources available to help the community revitalize brownfields and promote sustainable reuse;
- 5) Lay the foundation to take a new look at the future development and growth of Arkwright/Forest Park and Spartanburg as a whole;
- 6) Generate recommendations to ensure community involvement as well as short and long-term development strategies; and

7) Achieve a beneficial revitalization for the Arkwright/Forest Park community.⁵⁷

Although the first forum was described as successful,⁵⁸ crucial events took place during the second forum that eventually molded the partnership into the shape it still holds today. First, a consultant for the community alienated potential supporters by presenting himself as overconfident and misrepresenting the Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods by explaining that they lacked the capacity and money to lead the revitalization effort.⁵⁹ Following the forum, a member of the IWG explained to Mitchell that only the community could represent itself and that the community needed to take full leadership over the redevelopment process. Up until this time, according to Mitchell, the community felt that it needed outside consultants to act on the community's behalf. In response, ReGenesis, and particularly ReGenesis' director, Mitchell, began to serve as the leader for the two neighborhoods. Second, the IWG representative, according to Mitchell, also explained that ReGenesis needed to make sure that its vision and priorities align with the vision and priorities of both the City and the County. If these can align, the IWG representative pointed out, the federal agencies would be in a much better position to offer assistance.⁶⁰

Following another forum held in September, participants asked that specific individuals be named to represent the community, the City, and the County. The City was involved because of its role in the clean up and redevelopment of the Arkwright Dump. The County was involved because much of the area ReGenesis planned to redevelop falls within the jurisdiction of the County. Mitchell was selected to represent the community, Michael Garrett was selected to represent the City, and Elena Rush was selected to represent the County. These three came to form the core steering committee for the ReGenesis partnership.⁶¹ A representative from EPA's southeast regional branch also began to regularly participate in the core steering committee meetings because of its cleanup roles with the Arkwright Dump and fertilizer plant sites and its current commitment as an Environmental Justice Demonstration Project member.

The committee began to meet regularly and jointly plan partnership forums. However, the process has

not always gone smoothly. For instance, early on, the County wanted greater assurances that Harold Mitchell was, indeed, the spokesperson for the community. In response, the ReGenesis board sent the County a letter explaining that in fact, Mitchell did fully represent ReGenesis,

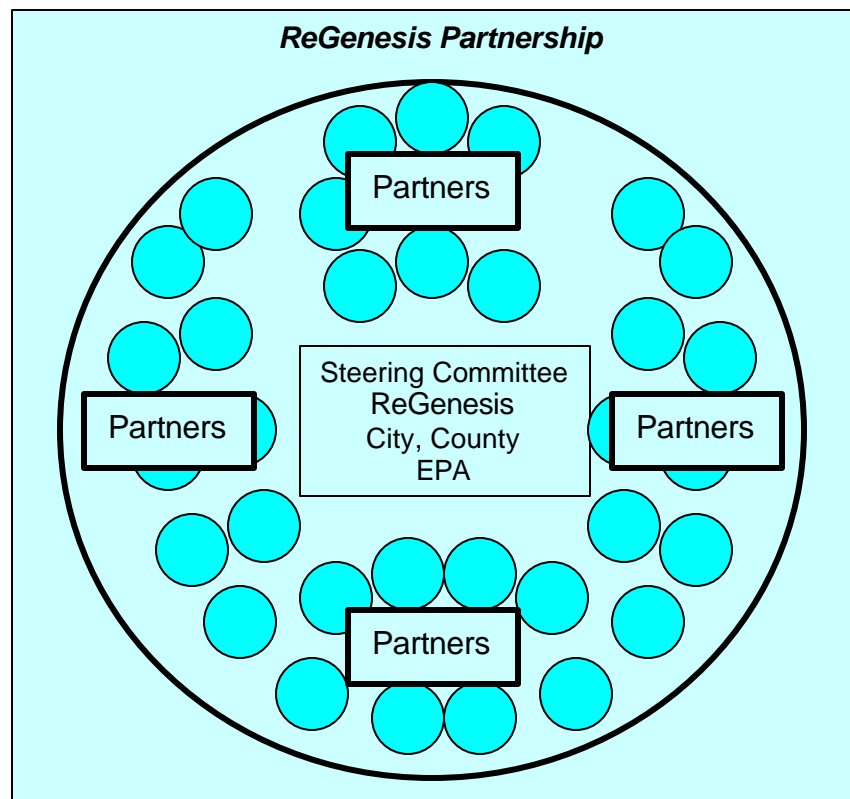


Figure 1. EPA Representation of ReGenesis Organizational Structure

which in effect represented the residents of Arkwright and Forest Park. The steering committee uses these pre-forum meetings to explore important decisions regarding the revitalization effort. Although formal consensus is not the goal, the steering group members regularly strive to reach agreements acceptable to all, even amidst often-conflicting viewpoints. The partnership revitalization forums are then used as opportunities to report out progress being made on the revitalization effort. Typically Mitchell opens the forums with an introduction, and then the steering committee members give updates on specific tasks. Following this, a distinct component of the revitalization process may be discussed in detail, such as a specific brownfields redevelopment or the overall planning process.⁶²

Two additional partnership forums were held in 2000. Starting in 2001, the steering committee began holding forums on a quarterly basis.⁶³ In addition to the partnership forums and the work of the steering committee, a special Spartanburg Workgroup at EPA meets monthly to coordinate its Spartanburg activities, often conducting conference calls with members of the core partnership group. Mitchell explained that through the work of Rush and Garrett, the community has begun putting its trust once again in both the City and County. Mitchell explained that previously the community expected that once the City or the County made a decision, the decision was final, irrespective of what the community had to say. Now, according to Mitchell, the community views the City and County as allies.⁶⁴

Although the partnership continues to expand its organizational capacity, and has recently more thoroughly defined its organizational structure, the partnership is best explained as consisting of a broad collection of individual connections between the partnership steering committee and various organizations.

ReGenesis has tirelessly persuaded new partners to become involved in the redevelopment effort. However, the County has taken an active role in keeping track of the existing and new partners through an electronic database and informing partners of upcoming forums either through electronic or regular mail.⁶⁵ As of September 2001, a partnership summary indicated that 76 partners currently contribute, or intend to contribute, to the redevelopment efforts.

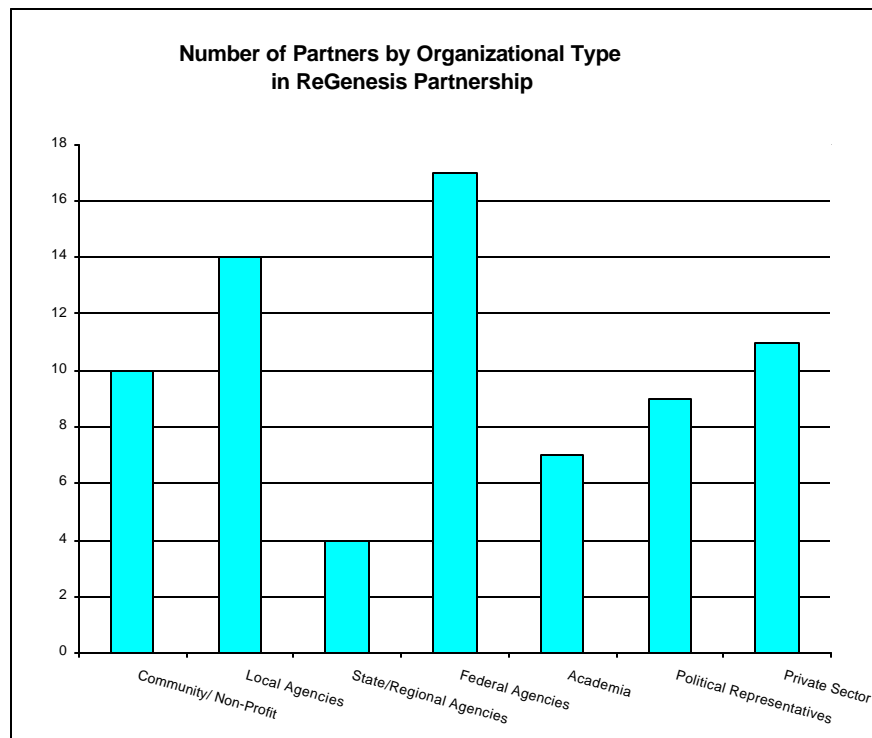


Figure 2. EPA Estimate of Partners in ReGenesis Partnership

Partnership Goals

The overall vision of the ReGenesis project is to clean up and revitalize the Arkwright and Forest Park areas through the use of collaborative partnerships in order to transform the community “into a nice place to live.”⁶⁶ To achieve this vision, ReGenesis partners have identified seven project goals. These include: (1) creating a comprehensive redevelopment plan; (2) cleaning up contaminated sites; (3) providing for public safety, education, and life skills; (4) ensuring public health; (5) improving transportation access; (6) creating green space and greenway trails; and (7) developing affordable and energy efficient housing.⁶⁷ In addition to outlining the project elements, the project partners have identified five project approaches that should be used (or adhered to) in pursuit of the project goals. These include: (1) collaborative partnerships; (2) environmental justice; (3) community revitalization; (4) community empowerment and participation; and (5) local problem-solving.⁶⁸

Partnership Activities

The ReGenesis partnership is still in the early to middle stages in terms of meeting project goals and few major partnership activities have been implemented. The recognition that the partnership has more work to be done is reflected in the fact that relatively few tangible effects from the cleanup and revitalization efforts can be seen. Apart from the deconstruction of the fertilizer plant, the community is still waiting for EPA to make final determinations on the cleanup of the Arkwright Dump and fertilizer sites before cleanup and revitalization activities can begin.

Although most activities have not begun, the partnership has been heavily engaged in laying the necessary groundwork to ensure planned activities will take place, which, in addition to the cleanup of the contaminated sites, include the building of a job training center, a technology center, and a public health clinic; the development of a parkway more easily linking the neighborhoods to the greater Spartanburg community; the construction of a series of greenspaces and greenway trails; and the development of affordable, energy efficient housing. To ensure these activities will take place, the partnership members have been working to secure funding and additional partners.

Since 2000, the partnership has secured over \$1.1 million through grants. The primary sources of funding include: Senate Appropriations initiated by Senator Ernest Hollings (SC-D) issued through HUD Neighborhood Improvement Grants; EPA Superfund Redevelopment, Brownfields, and Environmental Justice grants; and a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) health center grant. The City and Vigindustries have also made monetary contributions. The partnership has also identified over ten additional potential funding sources for cleanup and revitalization activities. In addition to securing funding through grants, several persons are contributing varying portions of their staff time or volunteering to support the project. EPA’s southeast regional branch alone has over eight people involved in various aspects of the partnership.

Another key partnership activity, underway since May 2001, has been periodic meetings hosted by the City to identify which parties, in addition to the City, may have significantly contributed waste to the Arkwright Dump. One of the first of its kind, this collaborative effort, following EPA draft policy guidance, involves regular conference calls⁶⁹ and interviews with community members to determine the history of the site and better identify all possible waste contributors. One interviewee commented that although community input to identify potentially responsible parties is typically not significant, the Arkwright and Forest Park community has

provided an uncharacteristically large amount of helpful information. Finding additional responsible parties that can help finance the cleanup will be critical since the Dump cleanup costs are expected to be more than the City can pay.

The following sections primarily describe interviewees' responses to questions gathered from interviews conducted by EPA's Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation primarily during the week of October 1, 2001. The sections focus on interviewees' impressions regarding measuring partnership success, partnership success and challenges, recommendations for improving the partnership, overall value of the partnership, and the value of federal involvement in the partnership.

Measuring Success

The ReGenesis Partnership has not developed a framework to measure if and how well their activities are being implemented, or if their activities are a success. Some measures of success are, however, being built into discreet project components such as the health care clinic work plan, the Brownfields assessment work plan, and the Arkwright Dump Superfund Redevelopment Initiative (SRI) work plan. A sample of measures of success from the SRI work plan⁷⁰ is included below.

Goal Coordinated efforts between US EPA, the County, the City, the Community and other stakeholders	
Objective: Create newsletter and website to inform all stakeholders	Measure: number of hits on the website, number of newsletters distributed
Objective: Meetings with residents and stakeholders	Measure: input from community meetings; tracking participation at the public forums; community participation on the various committees; and number of inquiries about the project
Objective: Identify stakeholders	Measure: survey results for stakeholders' needs and concerns of the project
Objective: Coordinate communication between all stakeholders involved	Measure: evaluation surveys; preparation of a table of ongoing initiatives, the recipient or entity responsible for managing the funds, and key contacts

Figure 3. Sample of Measures of Success for Arkwright Dump Redevelopment Initiative

Several interviewees indicated that overall success would be measured in tangible terms such as contaminated site cleanup and clinic construction. Another interviewee indicated that some measures have been developed, but that they were dependent upon the cleanup of the contaminated sites. One interviewee indicated that no overarching measures had been developed, but such an effort would be valuable. Another endorsed the need to establish timelines for each of the project goals.

Partnership Successes

Most interviewees expressed satisfaction with the direction of the partnership, their ability to participate in it, and indicated that their interests were being met. Regarding the success of project activities, most indicated that it was too early to determine the success of partnership activities since most were still planned for the future. However, interviewees expressed strong support for the actions that have been undertaken so far and felt strongly that the future actions will have the desired effect. Two interviewees remarked that one direct outcome of all the activities performed up to this point has been the bringing of real inspiration and excitement to a group of people that previously had very little about the prospects in their community.

In terms of greatest overall success, most interviewees indicated that the development of the partnership itself has been the greatest success. According to interviewees, the partnership has brought former adversaries together. One interviewee explained that with the partnership different groups now had a common cause and were emotionally united. Another explained that simply getting people together in the same room to work together on issues has been very important. Asking for the reason behind the partnership success, most indicated Harold Mitchell and ReGenesis first. The work of ReGenesis has enabled an atmosphere that is conducive to partnering. As one interviewee noted, ReGenesis “extended the olive branch.” ReGenesis wanted “everyone to be involved and everyone to benefit.” ReGenesis was “interested in harmony instead of friction.” Other reasons given for the partnership’s formation include the leadership roles of the Mayor and the County and the Interagency Working Group’s urging of the various groups to come up with their own solutions to the challenges facing the Arkwright and Forest Park.

Another major success, not entirely separate from the development of the partnership, has been the securing of funding. Although some interviewees identified successful fundraising for discreet project initiatives, such as the funding of the health clinic, others indicated that they were pleased so far with the overall ability of the partnership to secure funding and resources. Interviewees did not directly address why the securing of funds has been so successful, however, it is likely that most would attribute this success to focused partnership leadership and enthusiastic support for the partnership from a variety of different organizations.

In addition, interviewees cited the partnership’s commitment to community involvement as an important success. Of the thirteen persons who addressed this issue, twelve highlighted the efforts being made to involve the Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods in almost every aspect of the project. The key reason for the high rate of community involvement is ReGenesis, through which community members can have their concerns fed directly into the partnership. The only challenge faced by ReGenesis, suggests one interviewee, has been the organization’s difficulty in continually translating large amounts of technical information to the community on a regular basis.

Partnership Challenges

Interviewees voiced several challenges facing the partnership but no clear consensus emerged from the responses. Five interviews cited communication/organizational issues as an impediment to success, noting that the numerous players and the many discrete components of the project make it difficult to understand what the overall project goals are, what the roles of each of the partners will be, and/or what activities are planned for the future. For instance, one

interviewee voiced a strong desire to contribute significantly, but has so far only participated on a limited basis because of lack of guidance from the partnership on how best to participate. Similarly, two interviewees remarked that a lack of a single point person for the project inhibits success. Currently, Harold Mitchell is the overall leader of the project, however, neither Harold nor anyone else participating in the partnership has the time or resources necessary to devote full attention to project coordination and management. Despite these concerns, it is important to note that within days before these interviews were conducted, the partnership steering committee had distributed an information packet describing in detail the project elements, the actual and potential resources dedicated to the project, and designated lead partners for implementing each project element in preparation for an upcoming full partner meeting. It is conceivable that this, in combination with the full partner meeting, served to clarify project goals and elements along with partner roles and responsibilities.

A second challenge centered on industry/community tensions. Specifically, three interviewees identified the conflicting viewpoints between ReGenesis and Rhodia as barriers to success. To overcome this tension, one interviewee recommended that Rhodia and ReGenesis continue their on-going dialogue. The interviewee also recommended that Rhodia work to develop a better relationship with the nearby community. Two of these same interviewees also identified the ReGenesis lawsuit against IMC as a potential barrier to success. Another interviewee noted more generally that conflicting interests between the affected community and industry might inhibit partnership success.

A third challenge focused on partnership sustainability. Because of the complexity of the project and the length required to address the various issues, four interviewees indicated that efforts to sustain momentum and support would be key. Expressing frustration, one interviewee remarked that even finalizing a voluntary agreement between the City and EPA regarding the Arkwright Dump took several months. In order to sustain the enthusiasm for the partnership, one interviewee noted that new parties must be continually courted and regularly involved, such as business leaders, over the next few years.

Another challenge centered on issues of funding. Four interviewees cited the difficulty the partnership may face in ensuring adequate funding for partnership activities, even though over a million dollars in grants has been secured so far. This is not surprising, however, since the cleanup projects will undoubtedly prove to be very expensive. No suggestions were provided on how to overcome this obstacle.

Other barriers to success cited by interviewees include obtaining the full support of the City and the County for the cleanup and revitalization effort; bringing all the partners together in a timely manner; persuading companies to take responsibility for their roles in the Arkwright Dump site; fully engaging the business community as a partner; changing the mindset of the community so it views itself as a driver of the revitalization process instead of simply another participant within the partnership; ensuring that the contaminated sites are cleaned up; understanding what constitutes success for the affected community; and completing a detailed comprehensive plan for the revitalization effort. The comprehensive plan, which is being developed out of funds from a Brownfields assessment grant provided by EPA, is currently in its formative stages.

Interviewees were also asked whether the organizational styles and procedures of the different partner organizations limited effective collaboration between partners. Of the twelve who addressed this topic, seven indicated that the different organizational styles have not been barriers. One explained that the great number and diversity of partners is actually a strength of

the partnership. Two interviewees remarked that even when differences emerge between partners, solutions are sought in a cooperative manner. Another remarked, however, that even though organizational differences limiting the effectiveness of the partnership were not apparent, some organizations were not performing as capably as they could be. Five interviewees highlighted organizational differences that have contributed to partnership difficulties. One explained that differing organizational requirements within a government agency had hindered the interviewee's ability to complete a project grant proposal in a timely manner. An agency interviewee remarked that federal agency travel restrictions limit some federal agencies from participating as effectively as they could. This same interviewee also noted federal agencies often don't participate more constructively because it is not always clear how their participation will directly relate to each agencies' mission. A second agency interviewee indicated that, in certain circumstances, certain ethics rules might limit agencies' abilities to participate as effective partners. The interviewee cited a recent example where the partner agency had been asked to send a letter to another ReGenesis partner agency endorsing a distinct component of the partnership. The agency's ethics attorney explained that it was inappropriate for either the agency or agency personnel to endorse a company or entity. However, after consultation with the agency's ethics attorney, the agency revised the letter from one of support for the partnership component, to one expressing the agency's interest towards supporting the goals of the partnership that will partly be met by the implementation of the partnership component.

Interviewees' Recommendations for Improving the Partnership

Interviewee recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the ReGenesis Partnership fell into three rough sets of recommendations. The first set centered on the need for training. Three interviewees highlighted areas where the partnership could benefit from training. Each, however, recommended different types of training. One suggested that more general environmental justice and community involvement training be made available for partners. A second interviewee suggested that partners should participate in leadership training in order to better ensure that partner commitments are kept. A third recommended that partners participate in training on professional collaborative management. Related to issues of leadership and professional collaborative management, a second set of recommendations focused on better establishing timelines and commitments. One felt strongly that timelines should be produced for the main goals and that partners should then be kept accountable. Similarly, a second interviewee indicated that more work needed to be done to secure stronger commitments from partners. A third suggested that additional work was needed at the close of each partner meeting to ensure important points were captured and clarified for all partners to see, possibly being made available in a newsletter. A third set of recommendations focused on ensuring that ReGenesis' chairman, Harold Mitchell, was made executive director of the partnership and given the resources necessary, such as an office, to perform all necessary functions associated with the position. Other recommendations included ensuring that one objective party be put in place to guide the partnership, making more information available about the community, increasing communication between different federal agencies, obtaining quicker responses from federal agencies, keeping an open mind, and respecting differences in perspectives.

Interviewees' Recommendations for Other Communities Using Partnerships

Thirteen interviewees offered suggestions for other communities interested in using collaborative partnerships to address environmental justice issues. Most felt that a well-planned partnership was essential. To achieve this interviewees recommended the following activities:

make a list of all possible partners from the federal to local levels, learn about their interests, and then identify how their interests overlap and can benefit the partnership; bring partners into the process early; establish a solid vision; ask partners what you want your community to look like in ten years; obtain consensus on the goals and objectives; categorize and prioritize goals and objectives; and secure buy-in from high level stakeholders. Three interviewees also placed emphasis on the need for the community to speak with one voice. One even went as far as suggesting that action be taken to better encourage and support grassroots leaders to emerge from affected communities. Two interviewees also emphasized the need for communities to obtain education on environmental justice issues at the start of the partnering process. They added that it is important for partners to understand how the affected community perceives environmental injustice. Along with environmental justice training, one of the same interviewees recommended that underlying issues of race and history be openly explored before taking actions to address the immediate concerns. Finally, one interviewee suggested that communities identify a federal contact when starting a partnership, and another suggested reviewing other partnership success stories.

Value of Collaborative Partnership

When asked directly the value of addressing issues through a collaborative partnership approach, interviewees came up with a variety of responses. One interviewee indicated that partnering results in quicker decisions. Another indicated that partnering, or acting like a team in the words of the interviewee, gives all interested parties a chance to provide their input and feel positive about their contributions. Related to the team concept, one interviewee stated that the partnership process has resulted in more people becoming aware of each other, and another stated that the process enables partners to see the “connectivity across issues” since each get to share their views. Also related to the team concept, one interviewee noted that in a partnership, partners act as “lifelines” to each other through their willingness to share expertise. Two interviewees noted that partnerships aid in the leveraging of resources. Particularly, one noted that once different groups show a willingness to work together, others are more likely to join in and participate. Finally, one agency interviewee noted that the partnership has made it easier to encourage other agency colleagues working in Spartanburg to engage in additional community involvement efforts.

When asked whether the collaborative process could be used to address other issues that the Arkwright and Forest Park community is facing, thirteen of thirteen partners addressing this topic responded affirmatively. In addition, most indicated that this approach could be used in many other communities to address a variety of issues. One interviewee remarked that this model would be very useful to begin applying in other communities facing Brownfields redevelopment issues. Another mentioned that this model could certainly be used to address future environmental justice issues facing other communities, and added that local leaders could be persuaded to buy into a process like this every time. One interviewee cautioned, however, that despite the seeming success of the partnership approach in Spartanburg, advocates should not rely on a single “cookie-cutter” approach when pulling partnerships together.

When asked whether the main issues affecting the Arkwright and Forest Park community would have been addressed without a collaborative approach, of the twelve that addressed this question, two indicated that the issues would have been addressed but the process would have taken much longer. For example, one stated that the issues would have been addressed in a “very piecemeal and unorganized fashion.” Another was less confident, stating that the issues may have been addressed, but less successfully. Five interviewees felt that only some of the issues would have been addressed without a partnership approach. For

instance, two stated that while the contaminated sites may have been cleaned up, the effort to plan the redevelopment of the Brownfields would not have been initiated. The remaining five indicated that the issues would not have been addressed. For example, one interviewee suggested that the competing interests between different parties could not have been resolved. Another remarked that the parties would have ended up arguing the issues in court.

Value of Federal Involvement in Partnership

When asked about the effect of having federal agencies participate in the ReGenesis Partnership, responses covered two broad categories: resources and credibility. Five interviewees remarked that the greatest effect of federal involvement has been the resources the federal agencies bring to the table. Specifically these resources, as indicated by the interviewees, include money, technical assistance, and expertise. One interviewee stated that without the federal technical expertise and dollars, the partnership would not have emerged. Additionally, another type of resource that federal partners bring is a knowledge of resources that other federal agencies may have available. One interviewee stated that enabling the community to identify the broad range of resources available at the federal level covering everything from transportation to issues of public health is a key part of a holistic approach to revitalization. Regarding issues of credibility, three interviewees specifically indicated that federal involvement has elevated the level of trust and credibility surrounding the project. Along these lines, another explained that having federal partners has helped the partnership earn the trust of banks in the area. Additionally, the interviewee noted that having federal partners involved helps to better ensure that money allocated for partnership activities does not get misspent. Also related, but more intangible, one interviewee noted that having federal partners involved helps provide a national presence and a direct connection with Washington, D.C. Finally, one interviewee noted that having the federal partners involved “has been one of those uplifting, empowering things for the community.”

When asked what federal partners have gained by participating in the ReGenesis Partnership, most interviewees indicated that they gained a better knowledge of the community. Specifically, they learned about specific threats that the community faced, such as the Arkwright Dump. In addition, federal partners have learned more about how to effectively work with communities and design policies that better meet the needs of local people. For instance, one interviewee remarked that involvement in Spartanburg has helped the interviewee’s agency better appreciate that the source of true collaborative problem solving is at the local level. In addition, interviewees noted that federal partners have learned more about issues of environmental justice and how to address them. One agency representative noted that before becoming involved in this project, the interviewee did not fully appreciate the disparities facing minority communities. In fact, before getting involved in the project, the interviewee typically assumed that communities would look to federal agencies if they had problems. But involvement in this community project enabled the interviewee to more fully appreciate how some communities have lost full trust in the government to assist them. Other interviewees noted that involvement in the ReGenesis project has helped federal partners gain the good will of the community, learn how to think innovatively, and better appreciate that communities with significant environmental problems may still be unidentified.

When asked whether Federal agencies have been able to better coordinate their activities as a result of their involvement in the ReGenesis Partnership, most found it difficult to answer, especially since EPA has been the federal agency most visible in Spartanburg. Although three out of the eight interviewees who addressed this issue felt that EPA was doing a good job in its coordination both with the City and the community, most interviewees were

unclear whether better federal coordination across different federal agencies has occurred. One interviewee explained that towards the beginning of the partnership, several agencies indicated they had resources to contribute; however, since that time it has appeared that many of these same federal agencies have disengaged. This observation was also echoed by another interviewee's statement. Finally, one interviewee felt that having federal partners involved has resulted in better coordination, mainly through improved understanding of the different agencies resources, but that agencies still have a lot to learn in this area.

Interviewees were also asked what federal agencies could do to be more effective partners in local collaborative efforts. The first set of recommendations centered on how agencies should interact with communities. These included getting involved early on in the partnership, meeting with the affected community at the ground level, genuinely listening to community concerns, and ensuring that agency representatives possess sufficient maturity, skill, and community involvement experience to participate effectively. One interviewee remarked that it requires significant effort to undo damage resulting from actions taken, or comments made, by agency representatives inexperienced in community work.

Another set of recommendations focused on how agencies promote and make their resources available. Two interviewees suggested that federal agencies should do a better job of disseminating information about applying for funding. Another suggested that agencies should make community focused resources more user-friendly. Citing the former Livable Communities initiative as a model, this interviewee added that this could be done in a number of ways, including asking each agency to support one person in each region and state who could effectively talk about available resources with communities. These persons should then be listed in a directory, similar to what the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG) currently makes available describing federal contacts. Other suggestions regarding this topic included making one agency serve as a lead agency for directing interested communities to resources available at other agencies, and requiring that each agency involved in a partnership use only one person to work directly with the community. One local interviewee explained that it was intimidating to try and understand the different work EPA was trying to do in Spartanburg. The interviewee further explained that with three-four different points of contact at EPA, it made it that much more difficult to understand all the actions being undertaken. Echoing this sentiment, an agency interviewee explained that EPA was working to ensure better internal coordination at EPA of all those that were working directly on the Spartanburg issues. To accomplish this, an internal work group has been functioning since the summer of 2001. The work group has even developed a set of principles to better guide the work of the group. Other recommendations to improve how federal agencies work in partnerships include sharing the stories of these efforts around EPA more regularly, continuing the IWG, working to learn more about the different resources that each agency has available, and requiring that more than one federal agency be involved local partnerships in order to develop a fuller picture of resources that are available.

Key Findings

- Partners are generally satisfied with the current state of the partnership and their ability to participate in it. They are satisfied that their interests are being met and are optimistic about its future activities.
- Participants would appreciate greater information on project goals, objectives, timelines, measures of success, roles, and action items from meetings. This would enable

partners to feel confident about their role within the partnership and how they can best apply resources to support it.

- Partners are very satisfied with the level of community involvement in the partnership. ReGenesis has been effective at keeping the Arkwright and Forest Park community well informed about the actions of the partnership. In addition, ReGenesis ensures that input from the community will be heard and used to help define and refine the overall partnership vision and direct activities necessary to implement that vision.
- Federal involvement played a significant role in helping the partnership emerge. Specifically, federal partners have provided integral resources and technical assistance. In addition, by directly participating, federal partners have boosted the credibility of the partnership effort and raised expectations of the Arkwright and Forest Park community that the overall partnership goals will be met.
- Local participation by the City and County has also been critical to the partnership. However, some partners feel that additional support from the City and County is still needed in order for the partnership activities to be fully implemented.
- Much of the partnership's concern regarding future activities centers on the investigation and cleanup of the contaminated sites and the development of the Brownfields comprehensive plan. EPA has not yet made final decisions regarding the cleanups of the Arkwright Dump and fertilizer plant sites. Although expectations are that cleanup issues will be resolved, several activities must be put on hold until key decisions regarding the sites are made. Another key component is the development of a comprehensive plan for the area. This plan will help better define the overall vision of the partnership, but until a final plan can be completed and agreed to, few revitalization efforts can proceed.
- Unresolved disputes, between ReGenesis and Rhodia, and between ReGenesis and IMC, could adversely impact the effectiveness of the partnership in the future. However, few partners believe that these disputes will significantly detract from the partnership achieving its overall cleanup and revitalization goals.

Afterword

After interviewees had the opportunity to review the first draft of this case study, a member of the ReGenesis Partnership's steering committee submitted an update regarding activities of the partnership since March 2002. These are summarized briefly below. First, over 100 partners are now involved in the ReGenesis Partnership effort. Second, the ReGenesis Partnership has been awarded a \$230,000 Ford Foundation grant; and a \$1.2 million U.S. Senate appropriation for transportation development (U.S. Senator Ernest F. Hollings). Third, the partnership has been awarded a \$250,000 Weed and Seed grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. Finally, in June 2002, Harold Mitchell was awarded EPA's National "Citizens Excellence in Community Involvement Award."⁷¹

List of Interviewees

Doug Bracket	Spartanburg Technical College
George Fletcher~	Fletcher Consulting
John Funderburk	Upstate Assistant for U.S. Senator E.F. Hollings
Mike Garret	City of Spartanburg
Dr. David Goolsby	South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
Brian Holtzclaw	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ralph Howard	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Kelly Long	Office of U.S. Congressman Jim DeMint
Harold Mitchell	ReGenesis
Cynthia Peurifoy	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Lewis Pilgrim	Arkwright Neighborhood Association
Robert Reed~	Councilman for City of Spartanburg
Elena Rush	Spartanburg County
James Talley~	formerly Mayor of City of Spartanburg
Jim Trafton	Rhodia, Inc.
Brad Wyche~	UpState Forever

~Denotes that individual participated in a group interview.

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